

COMMWEB

April 24, 2006 Monday

CIOs Retain IT Staff With Training And Flex Time, Not Money

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More CIOs are offering training, professional development, and flexible schedules rather than providing bigger paychecks and bonuses in an effort to keep key IT personnel happy and on the job. Those are the results of a survey of 1,400 CIOs released last month by Robert Half Technology, an IT staffing and consulting firm.

When asked what they were doing to retain key IT talent, 63% of the CIOs surveyed said they provided staff with training or career development opportunities. That approach was far ahead of the second-place tactic--offering a flexible schedule, which was cited by 47% of those surveyed.

Money still works, however. Boosting base pay was cited by 41%, and giving bonuses was mentioned by 31% of participants.

Are the CIOs indulging in wishful thinking in an era of tight budgets and payrolls, or have training and flexible schedules become more important as workers seek a better balance between work and their lives?

More Than Bucks -- What approach is your company taking to retain key IT talent?

"You would think at first glance that money would be No. 1. But workers value career growth and work-life balance," says Ryan Gilmore, a manager at Robert Half. "It doesn't matter how well someone is paid--if they don't feel their career is developing, they're going to leave."

When listing the factors that matter most to them about their jobs, more than half of IT staffers cite job stability, challenge and responsibility, and flexible work schedules, according to InformationWeek Research's National IT Salary Survey of 5,456 staffers. Base pay was cited by 48%. Job responsibility was cited most often--by 68%--of the 4,969 managers who took the survey.

"We read every day about the latest and greatest emerging technologies, whether it's RFID, voice over IP, or Wi-Fi," says Steve Ostrowski, director of corporate communications for the Computer Technology Industry Association. "Without training and career development, introduction of a new technology falls into the category of 'one more thing to do.'"

Companies need to take a multi-pronged approach, says **Gregor Bailar**, CIO of financial services company Capital One. "We strive to provide a challenging and engaging work environment for our associates," he says. "We have found that it's the combination of learning and development programs, great benefits, desirable amenities, and flexible work arrangements that drives associate satisfaction."

Work At Home? Tastykake maker Tasty Baking, a pastry company founded in 1914, also provides a variety of benefits. "You have to give employees a basket of incentives," CIO Autumn Bayles says. "Training has to be supported with other things, like flex time."

One of her employees lives about 90 minutes from the office, so she allows him to work from home part of the week. By eliminating the commute, the worker saves gas and time and gets more work done in the days he works from home.

But what about cash? More money, either in a salary or in the form of a bonus, always is an acceptable way to reward good work. But other benefits are a good option when a company isn't able to give raises and bonuses. Still, "raises and bonuses are also good ways of holding on to valued staff," Dunkin' Brands CIO Dan Sheehan says. "No-nonsense, good old-fashioned dollars always help."